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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004604

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/17/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PRT TIKRIT: THE POST-SADDAM BA'ATH PARTY:
DEMOCRATS, INSURGENTS, AND THE MIDDLE GROUND IN SALAH AD DIN

REF: A. BAGHDAD 4408

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 4331

Classified By: Captain L. Hatton, Deputy PRT Team Leader, for reasons 1
.5 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is a PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din cable.

[1](#)2. (C/NF) SUMMARY. Support for the Ba'ath Party remains strong in Salah ad Din (SaD); however, the party's supporters are not a monolith. At the extremes are those actively promoting the insurgency and those willing to engage in the democratic process. In the middle are the majority of the province's residents. They see the Ba'ath Party as a symbol of stability and prosperity and long for the quality of life they had under the former regime. These political middle grounders turn a blind eye to insurgent activities, while hesitating to engage in the democratic political process. According to SaD Deputy Governor and Ba'athist confidant General Abdullah Ajabara (strictly protect), a portion of the pro-Ba'athist insurgents, who do not associate with terrorist organizations, have recently decided to consider joining the political process. This group, he assessed, has the potential to bring the province's political middle grounders in the political fold. They seek a diminished Iranian influence, an equitable seat at the political table, and reintegration into Iraqi society. With these stiff demands, however, they will have to be flexible. END SUMMARY.

Salah ad Din: The Down-Home Ba'athist Province

[1](#)3. (C) The Ba'ath Party enjoys tremendous support throughout the province of Salah ad Din (SaD). Tribal sheikhs, local politicians, and residents openly profess their Ba'athist support (Ref A). However, the party's supporters are not a monolith. At one extreme, Pro-Ba'athist insurgents seek to return the Ba'ath Party to power; and at the other, Ba'athist democrats desire to see the party formally incorporated into the political process. The vast majority of the province's residents, however, are some where in between.

[1](#)4. (C) For the political middle grounders, the Ba'ath Party symbolizes a stability and prosperity they have not known since the fall of the previous regime. In the democratic political process, they have seen the SaD Ba'athists fall from the political and economic have's to the have-not's, and they are not pleased with the change (Ref B). That said, most of them do not believe that the pro-Ba'athist insurgents offer a better solution. While they may turn a blind eye to pro-Ba'athist insurgent activities, most do not actively support them. They also do not support the pro-Ba'athist insurgents' marriages of convenience with Sunni extremist groups like Al Qaeda (AQIZ).

A Change in the Resistance Movement

¶15. (C/NF) According to SaD Deputy Governor and Ba'athist confidant General Abdullah Ajbara (strictly protect), there has been "a great change in the resistance movement." For the first time, a portion of the pro-Ba'athist insurgents have decided they are willing to discuss participating in the political process. Among this group, he claimed, are military and political professionals from the former regime, some of whom are on the "black list" of individuals who cannot return to Iraq (NFI), though no names were listed. He also stated that they do not associate with terrorist organizations. If brought into the political fold, General Abdullah believes this group has the necessary political clout to bring the province's political middle grounders with them.

¶16. (C/NF) General Abdullah said that this group of pro-Ba'athist insurgents sees the "current Shia-led government as failed," and they are concerned with what they perceive to be an increasing Iranian influence in Iraq. To come into the political fold, General Abdullah indicated that they want to see the Constitution reformed, the reintegration of former regime military professionals into the new Iraqi Army, militias disbanded, and a military isolated from politics. They also seek a diminishment in Iran's influence in Iraq and formal inclusion of the Ba'ath Party in the political process. According to General Abdullah, these individuals are willing to try working in the political process. However, if they cannot reach their goal through political means, they "will reach them in other ways."

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Comment

¶17. (C/NF) The SaD Ba'athists clearly see themselves as the once and future rulers of Iraq, and few in the province are ready to see the Ba'ath Party go. While it is unclear why General Abdullah's insurgent associates have chosen to think about engagement now, it is possible that a perceived growing Iranian influence and recognition of the Sunni's political plight may be forcing some pro-Ba'athist insurgents to consider the political process as an option. However, their demands are stiff, and they will have to be flexible.

¶18. (C/NF) COMMENT CONT. General Abdullah is the province's powerbroker and claims to be a sounding board for, not a part of, pro-Ba'athist insurgent elements. He continues to engage on this issue, and we will look for opportunities for more formal discussions with his associates. END COMMENT.

¶19. (U) For additional reporting from PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din, please see our SIPRNET Reporting Blog:
<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Tikrit>.
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